Library Use Only

The Musket

LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL'S STUDENT-RUN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1969

Page 8 Indoor track is Ready to Go

Page 5 Lex MUN Provides a Global Experience

Volume LXII Issue II—February 2020

The Spain Trip: A Dive into a New Culture and Language

Garen Sahakian
Shashwati Sanjay
Staff Writers

From Feb. 12 through 22, Lexington High School's Spanish Department will host a trip to Spain. The trip will be the newest addition to the LHS language programs, which work to immerse students in another culture. Existing programs include the annual French and German exchanges, as well as the Rome trip for Latin students. Ryan Casey, a Spanish teacher at LHS, believes the trip is an opportunity for students to develop their Spanish skills in a new environment.

"The purpose of the trip is to take kids out of the classroom environment and give them an opportunity to practice their language skills and experience the culture in the natural Spanish speaking world," Casey said.

Thirty students were chosen for the trip from an applicant pool of juniors and seniors. Over the course of eleven days, they immerse themselves in Spanish culture and language, interacting with their host families as well as with locals. It is a learning experience designed to push students out of their comfort zone.

"[The] biggest challenge, similar to what my goal is, is to always speak in Spanish … I think it will be hard, especially with my fellow students, because we're all used to speaking to each other in English that we'll just speak to each other in English for convenience when we don't know how to say something. It'll be especially hard to communicate with people who don't speak English," Emily Qiu, a senior, said.

Besides challenging students' linguistic skills, the trip is meant to provide deep cultural experiences through tours, classes, and traditional activities. The itinerary this year includes a language immersion tour of Madrid, guided tours of El Museo Nacional del Prado, La Puerta del Sol, and a flamenco show.

"We plan to go to museums and have different cultural experiences like going to [eat] tapas, taking salsa dancing classes, doing some cooking, doing a lot of walking around and exploring, and the kids are going to be in class Monday through Friday for four hours working on their grammar and communication skills every day," Casey said.

Photo by Athena Li.
Ryan Casey, a Spanish teacher at LHS in charge of the trip to Spain.

For some students, the Spain trip will be their first time abroad, while others are more seasoned travelers. All the selected applicants, however, have demonstrated their eagerness to interact with native speakers.

"I'm going because I really want to be able to improve my Spanish. I am fortunate enough to [travel to] Italy every summer and visit my extended family, and I always come back with a better knowledge of the language. I'm really hoping that this trip will do the same for me and push me out of my comfort zone. I'm also excited about getting to know new people in my grade, as well as juniors," Alessia Caira, a senior, said.

Singing Valentines Serenade LHS

Victoria Yuan
Rachel Zhang
Staff Writers

With Valentine's Day quickly approaching, members of Lexington High School a cappella groups are preparing for an annual LHS tradition:Singing Valentines. Students can pay ten dollars for a quartet of singers to perform a song for someone they care about. All proceeds will go toward the a capella program. On Valentine's Day, the singers will travel from classroom to classroom sporting coordinated outfits and singing love songs to unsuspecting and eager students alike.

Students can purchase Singing Valentines tickets during lunch up to two weeks before Feb. 14. After buying a performance, students provide the name of the Valentine recipient, along with the block and room number for when they would like the group to perform.

Hannah Kim, a senior, has been participating in the program since her sophomore year and is now one of the organizers. Kim explained that while the audition and rehearsal process is lengthy, it's a fun way for group members to bond before their performances.

"We hold auditions early January right after break, and then once we choose the new people, we form groups and we rehearse once a week in individual groups and prepare a couple of songs. At the end, we have a huge powwow where we go to someone's house and just hang out and perform for each other, and then we go to school and perform," Kim said.

The audition process for Singing Valentines is designed to create quartets of singers whose voices blend well. Although the idea of an audition can be stressful for some students, the process itself is meant to put singers at ease by introducing playful challenges.

"The audition process for Singing Valentines was actually pretty low-stress, even if we were nervous going into it. Everyone was really supportive of one another throughout the auditions and after we sang, we all got to share our favorite pick-up lines, which was super fun," Alice Van Evera, a sophomore, said.

Photo by Athena Li. *Hannah Kim, Senior and SingingValentines Organizer*

Mid-February is a particularly stressful time for LHS students, who begin their second semesters and near the final stage of their high school careers. Van Evera believes Singing Valentines performances are the perfect fix.

"I love the idea of bringing some joy and positivity into LHS classrooms the week before February break, which can be kind of a stressful time in terms of work to do. Last year, I remember it was great for everyone in the classroom to share a moment that was just about good music and having fun," Van Evera said.

When it comes to the future of Singing Valentines, Kim hopes that the tradition continues to stay a beloved and relevant part of LHS culture.

Don't Reject The Wall of Rejection

■ The Editorial Board

Throughout the first half of December, the Facebook feeds of many Lexington High School students were filled with announcements like, "[Insert College] 2024!!!" and Instagram stories captioned "My best friend is going to [Insert Another College]!" Friends and distant acquaintances alike flooded the posts, giving their congratulations.

The excitement that we share on these forums is genuine. We should celebrate each other's successes, as committing to a college can feel like the reward of four years of hard work.

Why shouldn't we extend the same camaraderie towards our rejections?

Rejections are usually kept private. There are no online posts. For seniors dealing with the letdown of rejection and apprehension about the future, the Wall of Rejection offers a broader support network.

Traditionally, the Wall of Rejection takes up a section of the Commons I bulletin board. Students anonymously post their rejection letters for anyone to write on. Everything from jokes to compliments fill up the print outs, injecting humor and levity into a stressful process.

"A lot of senior Senators shared that the college process has been really lonely, especially during the ED results, and that the Wall would make it a much more unifying experience," Hannah Kim, a senior and chair of the Senate communications committee, said.

The Wall of Rejection's absence is the result of administrative concerns.

"According to Dean Canniff, lots of parents and students complained last year that the [Wall] was elitist because it was full of Ivy League schools and people who did not apply to Ivies felt sad that they did not have a rejection letter to post on the Wall. Aside from the 'mean' comments directed toward the colleges for rejecting students, the Wall also harbored negative feelings [for those] who didn't have letters to post," Emily Qiu, Vice President of Class Council, said.

These complaints miss the point of the tradition. Its message isn't 'everyone applies to and gets rejected from Ivies.' It simply says, "rejection happens to everyone, everywhere." It actively seeks to dismantle the elitist idea that the college someone attends is a measure of their worth. It reminds everyone that these letters are just letters—products of a confusing, somewhat arbitrary process.

"I personally believe the college admissions process is an absurd lottery hidden behind the veil of 'meritocracy,' which is probably why I find most jokes about admissions officers and colleges hilarious," Kevin Yang, a senior, said. "Generally, these sorts of jokes seem pretty fair and have a similar idea behind them as the [Wall]—strengthening community in the face of rejection."

The concern about "mean" comments about various schools also seems contrived. Students who have committed to colleges likely did so because they think highly of them. It is unlikely that their opinions of the schools will change or that they will take personal offense because of a sarcastic comment directed towards an admissions officer.

Recently, a group of unidentified seniors posted their rejection letters on a Commons I bulletin board without administrative approval. Before they were taken down, the letters sported handwritten comments ranging from, "You are not unsuccessful" to "OK boomer."

With Regular Decision results rapidly approaching, the Student-Faculty Senate is taking a stand to reinstall the Wall of Rejection.

"We're in the beginning stages of dealing with the wall of rejection, but some ideas we have is having as many seniors as possible sign a petition to bring it back, and to talk to the guidance counselors about why it should be supported by administration to gain some leverage," Kim said.

The administration's stance on the issue will speak to the Lexington High School culture that they want to promote: one that makes rejections a shameful secret or one that encourages students to uplift each other through an emotionally challenging process.

Collegebored - Toxicity

■ Elizabeth Zhang
Columnist

It was a Friday night.

A mother, let's call her Susan, was in the car with a few other parents, driving home from a concert. The topic of EDs and EAs came up during the ride, of course. ED stands for early decision while EA stands for early action, which is when you apply to a school earlier than the regular admissions deadline.

Anyway, one mom, let's call her "that one mom," was persistently asking the other parents in the car, whose children were seniors, where their kids were applying to early. When it reached Susan, she mentioned the school her child had just gotten into through early decision. It wasn't an Ivy or a school with a whoppingly low acceptance rate. There was a pause in the car. Then, "that one mom" said, "Wow, what a great strategy that is! Applying to a school that no one else applies to!" Another mom chimed in: "That school used to be in the top ten, but over the years I've heard it has dropped down. But, it's still a good school!" Now, these were only the parents. Think of all the students who say the exact same things, or worse. We all know it happens around us. We might even say similar things ourselves. For me, ever since early decision results came out, there hasn't been a week where I haven't heard "Wow, they got into [insert school name]? That's surprising," or "I mean, I'm not saying that she didn't deserve to get in, but …" or even "I don't get how they got in. They're kinda dumb, not gonna lie."

Accepted students are people with lives, activities, and interests that make them unique. Sure, there are things like legacy and whatnot, which are unfair. But not everyone who is accepted into college is a legacy. You might not think that they're special enough for a college, but then again, you aren't a college admissions officer. That person might not have done research at a lab, but they had long, dedicated hours of practicing things they loved, like music or skating. Maybe they quietly persisted in doing things like writing instead of being the captain of a sports team, etc. Or they were just different from the majority of applicants. Who knows? The point is, they had something that the college wanted. It might not be something that you think is admirable, but it just might be what the college is looking for.

You just want to be done with it all and finally live again. Getting into a college is liberating, and who doesn't want that? It feels awful to have to do the process all over again when you get that deferral or rejection. This happens all the time, and it's completely normal. Moreover, even if the people who go or went there say that they had the best time of their lives, you might not—they're not you. Looking up to someone and aspiring to be like them is very different from actually being them. I promise there's at least one college out there who wants and admires you for who you are. Those colleges that didn't accept you? They're not worth it—not worth your time, effort, or self. Truly. Just keep on doing what you're doing, and you'll get to that point you're aiming for.

Musket Staff
2019-2020

Editors-in-Chief
Jyothsna Bolleddula
Jinhee Heo
Shweta Kondapi

News Editor
Emily Ma
Claire Pak

A&E Editor
Christina Li

Features Editor
Maia Hahn-Dupont

Opinion Editor
Ria Bhandarkar

Sports Editor
Alex Tang

Columns Editor
Kelly Hui

Online Content Editor
Ishika Jha
Pranathi Srirangam

Photography Editor
Athena Li

Faculty Adviser
Danielle Agresti

Printing Services
J&S Printing

Staff Writers
Anika Basu
Vedanti Bhargava
Laasya Chiduruppa
Sreenidhi Dharmaraj
Alex Fan
Kylin Gao
Bella Gharabegian
Srija Ghosh
Rebecca Gu
Aditi Kalia
Avni Kamat
Zahra Karim
Manon LeDonne
Angie Leung
Daisy Li
Francis Liu
Sarah Liu
Samiha Kazi
Meher Khanna
Sanjay Mallikarjun
Vidula Mannem
Aahan Mehra
Sarah Meyer
Ashna Mitta
Hannah Oh
Andrea Reier
Lydia Rommel
Garen Sahakian
Disha Sankholkar
Shashwati Sanjay
Gaeun Suh
Varun Suraj
Sidharth Vij
Zhuoran Wen
Bryant Xia
Victoria Yuan
Rachel Zhang

Photographers
Anya Ghali
Olivia Hoover
Amanda Kanashiro
Aahan Mehra
Matt Pearlman
Garen Sahakian
Disha Sankholkar
Phoebe-Yuxin Tian

Layout Designers
Phoebe-Yuxin Tian
Eric Gu

Columnists
Sanjna Das
Rishi Dorbala
Ananya Walhekar
Elizabeth Zhang

Editorial opinions in The Musket do not necessarily reflect the policies of Lexington High School or its administration.

Correspondence to The Musket c/o Lexington High School, 251 Waltham St., Lexington, MA 02421 or by email to musketnews@gmail.com. Short, tasteful responses are welcome.

Raising Ticket Prices is Worth It

Vedanti Bhargava
Bella Gharabegian
Staff Writers

All students in the Lexington Public Schools music program must participate in the annual holiday concerts.

Recently, there has been talk of raising the price of concert tickets to increase revenue for the program. The hard work of music students should be rewarded, and raising admission prices would mean more money to strengthen Lexington High School's music program. A larger budget would help pay for school instruments and general music supplies.

Many students have dealt with instrument repairs, which are often expensive. This is an instance where a larger budget would be useful.

"Last year, with the cellos, there were a lot of repairs needed. The music department needs funds for things like that, so in that case I understand [need]," Matthew Crowe, a senior cellist, said.

Friends of Lexington Music, Art, and Drama Students, or FOLMADS, is a parent-led organization that supports students in the performing arts program. This year, they decided to raise ticket prices for the holiday concert to ensure sufficient funds for the upcoming Wind Ensemble and Chamber Orchestra trip to Carnegie Hall in New York. However, many students disagreed with this move. Samuel Offsey, a sophomore and member of the Saxtet, said he fears the repercussions of high ticket prices emerging as a trend.

"I feel like it was a lot for a high school concert, and there's a lot of talk of 'Would it really impact the attendance?' I think there's much better attendance this year than [there] has been in the past, but I wouldn't want more than just that one concert to have that price on it," Offsey said.

Nonetheless, for this year, the money earned from the concerts did serve its purpose of helping students attend the Carnegie Hall trip. The high attendance from this year's concert, regardless of prices, indicates that the harms of higher ticket prices may not be very large.

"I think the fundraising was fairly successful, and it was able to save a considerable amount off the price of each trip," Offsey said.

Lexington is well-known for its extraordinary music program, a reputation that it should aim to uphold. Although having to pay more than five dollars to attend a high school concert may seem unreasonable to some, the enrichment of students from an improved music program pays off at the end of the day.

Teacher Gifts: Gratitude or Bribery?

Angie Leung
Daisy Li
Staff Writers

Before the holidays, many students give their teachers gifts to express their appreciation for their education. No matter what form they come in—be it gift cards to candy—gifts are a great way for students to show admiration for their teachers.

"Gifts show that a student appreciates their teacher and spent some of their time finding a token of their gratitude. This is the heart of Christmas spirit, and although gifts are not the only way to express this, it is one way," Niti Goyal, a freshman, said.

Even inexpensive or homemade gifts are very meaningful because the thought put into choosing a gift is more important than its price tag.

"I think teachers understand that there are differences in resources and time between students, and that doesn't really express differences in how much they appreciate their teachers," Caroline Li, a senior, said.

Phil Lehmann, a social studies teacher, said teachers are grateful for student consideration.

"Around the holidays, I think it is a nice gesture that teachers really appreciate. We really enjoy pooling whatever foodstuffs were given and, just, getting fat," Lehmann said.

Although many students believe that gifts are a good way to show their gratitude for their teachers, some students only seem to give their teachers gifts in hopes of getting better grades or more attention. While gifts are appreciated, outside of the holiday season, teachers tend to be less receptive towards gifts.

"Outside of the holidays, it can seem a little weird," Lehmann said.

However, a teacher's opinion of a student is more likely to be formed based on their time spent together in class rather than on whether or not they receive a gift for the holidays. Teachers spend around three months with students before the holidays, and already have well-formed opinions of them and their academic abilities. A thoughtful gift might cause a teacher to see a student in a better light as a person, but it is unlikely to influence how they are treated in the classroom.

"I don't think gifts influence opinions when it comes to instruction or assessment, as in grading. I think it can be nice when a student that you don't think really cares about your class gives you a gift," Lehmann said.

Don't Open Up Open Campus

Aditi Kalia
Staff Writer

At Lexington High School, juniors and seniors receive open campus privileges, which allow them to leave school grounds during free blocks. There have been discussions over whether this privilege should be extended to include sophomores and freshmen, who instead are assigned to study halls during blocks in which they have no class. Although open campus may be useful for students, limiting the privilege to upperclassmen is the best option.

Many upperclassmen appreciate the benefits that come with having these free blocks, like having access to both the LHS Library and Cary Memorial Library, allowing them to work comfortably. Those options are better alternatives to study halls.

"I definitely did not like being confined to one classroom, especially when it was my free time to do what I needed to do or wanted to do," Tej Chhabra, a junior, said.

Many students also view these free blocks as a transition between the structured work schedule of high school to the freedom and responsibilities of college.

"If you get some freedom now, it will help you adjust sooner to the freedom you have in college and how to manage that freedom, and how to be responsible with it," Chhabra said.

Free blocks serve as a much needed break from the routine of classes; many upperclassmen appreciate being able to relax and take a break from their academic work.

"Off campus is used for having fun, and being with your friends, so I don't think that it's necessary in an academic setting. I think it's great in terms of having a more stress-free component to school," Roshni Ray, a senior, said.

If free blocks were extended to all grades, it would be extremely difficult for the school to manage floods of students leaving at once.

Additionally, there is a question of trust with underclassmen, as it is more difficult to give a younger age group that much freedom and expect them to stay orderly.

"A disadvantage would be running things in the center. Sophomores are less mature than upperclassmen, and the school can't control what they do in the center, so it might make it a problem for the town, " Chhabra said.

There are also logistical issues, as more students might try to use the same resources at the same time, which would end up limiting the number of quality study spaces in the libraries and the Commons.

"I definitely think libraries would get more crowded, as study halls are conducted in classrooms," Chhabra said.

While there are many benefits to open campus, letting the entire school roam free whenever they want may be too much for the school to logistically handle. Therefore, it is best for underclassmen to just wait their turn.

Visit
lexmusket.com for more content!

Peer Mentors—LHS' Buddy System

■ Srija Ghosh
Rebecca Gu
Staff Writers

Many Lexington High School students may recall interacting with a Peer Mentor in the spring of eighth grade or at the beginning of freshman year. Whether it be giving directions or answering questions, Peer Mentors play an essential role in ensuring that new LHS students are accommodated and welcomed.

Martha Queenin, a social worker at LHS and the co-founder of the Peer Mentors program, was motivated to start the initiative after noticing the stress around acclimating to the school.

"As the school social worker, I listened to many ninth graders' stories each fall. There was a theme with many ninth graders who seemed to be feeling quite anxious about the building, getting lost and understanding the culture," Queenin said.

Another source of inspiration for the program was her son's similar experience.

"My son at the time had just started high school and I was intrigued on how they began their orientation in the spring of eighth grade with tours [and] info sessions. I wondered if it would be possible to try such a program at LHS, so with the support of Bill Cole, who was a dean at the time, we piloted the program and it was a huge success," Queenin said.

Peer Mentors are LHS students who serve as resources to new students, helping them adjust to a different school and guiding them from class to class.

"The goal of our program is to help students make connections, help students understand a bit about the high school culture and help them to experience LHS as a caring and compassionate community," Queenin said.

Peer Mentors can also become Peer Leaders. In contrast to Peer Mentors, who do most of their work in the beginning and end of the year, Peer Leaders meet every week to brainstorm ideas to make LHS a better environment for all students to thrive in.

"They often plan evening activities for students who could use some fun down time or a place for kids to connect. Pumpkin decorating, [ice cream socials], game nights or pasta parties are some of the events they have hosted in the past. They strive to do some behind-the-scenes stuff to make LHS a bit happier and more fun," Queenin said.

New students aren't the only people who benefit from the program. Peer Mentors themselves often find joy in witnessing the progress of new students throughout the year.

"During Step Up Day, I reached out to a pair of twins who didn't speak much English and were struggling in finding a friend group. Throughout the year, I talked to them about their classes, friends, and their lives before LHS. It has only been about four months and now I see them walking with friends, being social, and enjoying their time here, which makes me so happy," Christopher Cervone, a senior and Peer Mentor, said.

LHS can be a stressful and competitive environment, but programs like Peer Mentors show that there are resources dedicated to helping students adjust to the school.

LHS Musicians Jazz Up the Nite

■ Disha Sankholkar
Varun Suraj
Staff Writers

On Jan. 24, Lexington High School's jazz players performed in Commons II for the second Jazz Nite of the school year. The program consisted of the Jazz I classes, Jazz Septet, and Jazz Combo. The performance was a first for the Jazz I classes, whose members do not traditionally perform at Jazz Nite.

Mira Ward is a senior who plays jazz drums in both Combo and Jazz Ensemble. As a freshman, she also played percussion in Concert Band. For students who have played classical music almost all their lives, the Jazz Program offers the chance to connect with different music in an educational setting.

"I enjoyed being in Concert Band, but I definitely enjoy playing jazz music more than classical," Ward said. "I like that there is more creative freedom and opportunity to share your own musical voice."

Jazz I classes perform their own compositions at Jazz Nite. This is an exciting opportunity for many students, and one that leads to a greater appreciation for the genre. The second Jazz Nite of the year not only offers opportunities for performance, but also for student composition.

"Taking Jazz I has taught me that I can compose my own music," Celia Molla, a Jazz I guitarist, said.

Jazz Nite marks the start of the musical journey for many LHS jazz players and entry into the next level of the musical world.

"Jazz played at a world-class level is incredible, but what I truly love is getting to work with young people who are at the beginning of their jazz journey. For many of my students, this coming Jazz Nite will be their first jazz performance ever. I am looking forward to seeing them take the stage and take this big step in their musical lives," Justin Aramati, the LHS Band Director and Jazz Instructor, said.

Over the course of several days, the jazz players rigorously compose, edit, finalize, and rehearse their pieces in preparation for Jazz Nite.

"One of the greatest challenges of small-group jazz performance is that there is no conductor. The musicians run the performance entirely on their own, relying on visual and aural cues to stay together. Getting used to this system requires bravery, independence, and a lot of practice," Aramati said.

Jazz Combo is the school's most selective jazz ensemble. The group is led by Patrick Donaher, a performing arts teacher at LHS. Jazz Combo has a four year rotation of iconic jazz musicians, whose music they play at the second Jazz Nite of the school year. The rotation includes John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, and Duke Ellington. This year, Jazz Combo played tunes by Thelonious Monk, a jazz pianist who made great contributions to the genre.

Professional Development Day Encourages Teachers' Growth

■ Ashna Mitta
Gaeun Suh
Staff Writers

On Jan. 9, teachers from departments across Lexington High School came together to improve their teaching abilities and share knowledge during one of the five annual Professional Development Days. The focus of the session was the promotion of safe and supportive learning environments for all students.

"Professional Development can be a unifying thing for our departments and community as a whole. Taking the time to develop together can be very positive. I find the times when we as teachers can discuss the problems we see here at LHS and the ways we can fix them to better serve our students are the most helpful," Abigail Chaffer, an English teacher, said.

During this half-day, teachers mingled both in and out of their own departments in order to gain different perspectives in education. Elizabeth Cook, an environmental earth science teacher, traded advice with English and history teachers.

"You can learn the strategies that are used because [humanities educators] teach how to do research in English and history, which is applicable to earth science," Cook said.

Martha Queenin, an LHS social worker, also appreciated the opportunity to learn from teachers in all fields.

"As a social worker, I do appreciate having time to come together with colleagues. It is always energizing to hear colleagues share their work," Queenin said. "Professional Development Days give us an opportunity to come together, slow down a bit and collaborate in ways that I think make our school community a better place," Queenin said.

This provides educators with a rewarding opportunity to interact with other faculty outside the frantic rush of the school day.

"Sometimes I will go days without seeing [these teachers], and I really get to sit down with them and talk to them about teaching and learning," Cook said.

During the 2020 session, teachers focused on student equity, which has been a recurring theme among previous Professional Development Days. The objective is to ensure that every student has the same opportunities, regardless of their background.

"As someone who has never faced challenges because of my backgrounds or beliefs, hearing testimony from those who have has been a powerful experience. I am looking forward to exploring strategies and policies that will help Lexington move forward with this initiative," Cook said.

The goal of Professional Development Day is to give teachers newfound advice and knowledge surrounding education, no matter which class they teach. They can then implement improvements in the classroom and reflect on their impact as educators.

"Having my colleagues teach me has been such a joy and a meaningful part of my development as a teacher. Taking time to learn from the people around you can be so rewarding," Chaffer said.

LexMUN Provides a Global Experience

Maia Hahn-Du Pont
Manon LeDonne
Staff Writers

On Feb. 1, the Lexington High School Model United Nations Club will hold the annual LexMUN conference at LHS.

The conference, now in its fifth year, has attracted over 150 delegates and is a major part of the club's activities. This year, nine schools will participate. Members of the club run the six committees, each simulating a world issue that is debated in various United Nations committees or historical issues from the perspective of institutions such as the UN, the World Bank, or the US Senate.

"We compete at high octane, multi-day, college competitions, but also day long, high school run conferences that allow newer delegates to learn in a less stressful environment and experienced delegates to hone skills and win awards," Ian Carson, vice president of MUN and Under-Secretary-General of Media and Logistics for LexMUN, said. "LexMUN is a big deal for us because it's our chance to provide [that experience] to other schools and delegates."

The conference is also crucial for funding the club, allowing it to run for the rest of the year.

"LexMUN is a pretty big deal because the conference is a major revenue source for the club, especially since the school doesn't fund the club," Sadiv Gupta, vice president of MUN, said.

MUN members have been preparing for the annual conference since the beginning of the year.

"We assigned our committee chairs before school began, and now the entire club has been working for the last month or so to nail down logistics," Carson said.

The club members have various roles during the conference that help everything run smoothly.

"Members run our committees, help with registration and logistics, and work behind the scenes to introduce unexpected scenarios to delegates and make them think on their feet," Carson said. "A lot goes into creating six unique, interesting committees for a huge number of students looking to compete and have fun."

Photo by Disha Sankholkar.
Ian Carson, Junior and MUN Vice-President

Carson believes strongly in the conference's ability to help newer members of the club learn more about how MUN works by giving them the opportunity to be on the other side of the competition.

"I cut my teeth in MUN as a freshman running crisis and it taught me so, so, much about the nuances of Model UN, and it's helped me perform well in conferences to have been on the other side, evaluating how well delegates are doing," Carson said. "Personally, I think helping to run a conference has contributed immensely to some of my successes as in individual doing MUN."

Gupta also credits the conference for developing his leadership skills.

"It's been a very hectic experience and I'm sure the other officers would say the same. The conference taught us all about people management and forethinking," Gupta said.

Emersonfest

Vidula Mannem
Andrea Reier
Staff Writers

On Jan. 25, Emerson College held Emersonfest, an annual high school drama festival designed to immerse students in the world of theater. High school students across Massachusetts performed 15-minute plays in front of fellow competitors and a panel of judges. The festival also offered professional workshops on skills ranging from improvisation to musical theater.

"Emersonfest is really a unique opportunity for our students because it is a non-competitive festival. So, although it is a festival other high schools will be attending, they will get feedback, education, and sort of the 'if you were to do this performance again' ... 'here are our recommendations' ... And they are hearing this from Emerson College graduate students, who are studying theater, as well as their professors," Carly Kalivas, a drama teacher at both Clarke Middle School and Diamond Middle School, said.

Aidan Kelly, a junior who performed at this year's festival, explained how specific workshops helped him improve for future performances.

"I took the musical theatre workshop because the musical was coming up, to get a better feel for musical theater before I auditioned. It was definitely really helpful," Kelly said.

By exploring new techniques, students gained a deeper understanding of the art of performance. Above all, Emersonfest facilitated a team bonding experience among LHS students who love theater.

Each year, LHS students collaborate on script-writing, acting, and other areas of preparation the month before the festival. Kalivas held open auditions this year. In the end, Kalivas chose 19 students for the festival, eleven of whom were freshmen.

"The cool thing about the dynamic and having representation from all the grades is that you have people who have the experience, along with people who aren't jaded by the knowledge yet. Instead, they are able to explore and take risks, and later get reigned in," Kalivas said. "It is just a great group; all 19 are so wonderful to each other and so warm and supportive."

This year, the students performed a comedy skit titled The Princess Wars. It was written primarily by Kate Bromley, a drama teacher at Diamond Middle School. TThe 15 minute play was inspired by classic Disney archetypes along with a surprising twist.

"We brought the story of the princesses and the story of the monsters and found a tying theme and tying character to create one story. That's been our work so far—we have casted the show, figured out everyone's roles, figured out what our connecting elements are going to be, and it's going to be a lot of fun. It's definitely got a lot of heart and positive themes. But it's also got comedy to it," Kalivas said.

The festival not only offered high school students an opportunity to delve into a performance and receive detailed feedback, but also connected theater enthusiasts from all over Massachusetts through shared passion and hard work.

"Because workshops aren't like 'oh LHS gets to go to this workshop'—everybody signs up for different workshops, so it's a really good chance to meet friends. There's nothing I'd really change," Kelly said. "Just watching everybody's separate shows and seeing the amount of work they put into this is really fascinating."

College Food

Evan Li
Columnist

Throughout my college application process, dining was a very important aspect to consider. Since food is a significant part of my life, I wanted to ensure that I will be able to enjoy satisfying meals for the next four years.

When I spoke to my friends who are freshmen in college, I discovered that many were apathetic towards the food at their schools. It was just "there"—nothing horrible about it, but nothing spectacular either. One common thread from my conversations was that dining halls served a wide variety of options, more so than in high school. This information stood in stark contrast to my previous view of college food:scrolling through the websites of various universities, each one seemed to claim some ranking system put their dining hall food as top ten in the country.

So, I thought I'd find out for myself what college food was actually like. When visiting my older sister at Tufts, I decided to try out their dining hall. I was first surprised by the number of healthy options at Tufts. Their salad bar was about five times the size of the salad bars at Commons I and II combined. There were also many vegan and vegetarian options, something our high school lacks. Of course, I raced to the chicken tenders and french fries, while also piling some pasta and popcorn shrimp on my plate. I also took another plate for a burrito bowl. The chicken tenders did not have a crust and the french fries were somewhat stale. The burrito bowl tasted just like Chipotle, except half the quality. I finished the meal with some soft-serve ice cream and cookies. After expressing my disappointment in the food to my sister, she mentioned that I had gone on a "bad day," when the specials were not available. Mysteriously, the other three times I've visited my sister this year have been "bad days" as well.

My sister also mentioned that the restaurants around Tufts were really good, which is likely similar to other urban universities. However, eating out everyday is definitely not feasible. Perhaps the food at most other schools is mediocre as well. Since then, I've lowered my expectations for school food after high school. In fact, I can easily concede that nothing in the Tufts dining hall was better than a panini from Commons I!

Artist of the Issue: Rachel Camp

Zhuoran Wen
Staff Writer

From time to time, one may see a Lexington High School student sporting a bulky camera, either as a class obligation or a genuine passion for photography. Among the latter group is Rachel Camp, a senior and teaching assistant in the Introduction to Photography Class at LHS. Throughout the past year, Camp has participated in four school affiliated art shows and in the Lexington Art Walk.

Camp finds being a member of LHS's art community provides a different experience than working with outside art associations such as the Harvard Museum of Natural History and Monroe Center of Art.

"In school, it is more of me and other student artists. We put up artwork of students and organize the displays. But working outside of school I experienced a more profit and skill-oriented atmosphere and it was less inclusive. It was like a step into greater society," Camp said.

Camp spends her time pursuing two mediums of art: photography and printmaking. For her, these art forms serve as unique outlets to express her imagination and beliefs.

"Photography ... allows me to show part of myself through another lens. I used to be really interested in writing, but I can't get my ideas down on paper. Art gives me this alternative and creative opportunity to convey my thoughts," Camp said.

Yet, as is true of any endeavor, Camp has encountered challenges as a photographer and printmaker.

"People don't value photography and printmaking as much as traditional, realistic arts. There is a bias toward a certain type of art," Camp said.

Despite these obstacles, Camp has not lost her passion and curiosity for the activity.

As a TA, Camp advises less-experienced students to not fear encountering obstacles while making art.

"The best way to start is to just do it. I almost never have a fully formulated idea when I start working on a piece. Instead, I start with a rough idea and let it develop as I work. I get a lot of my ideas as I work. It's also worth it to seek advice from artists or artistic people that you know if you really need help," Camp said.

Photo by Athena Li. Rachel Camp, senior.

Camp views art as a multi-faceted activity that can play various roles in an individual's life.

"Many students look at art as simply a credit requirement. Yet art composes many parts of our life, from the art of communication to [the] art of thoughts. It could be taken as a legitimate career [or] as a way to study the historical past. It should not be defined just as [school] credits," Camp said.

The Choral Extravaganza Spread the Joy of Song

Hannah Oh
Staff Writer

On Dec. 19, fifth-graders from all six Lexington Public Schools filtered into the Lexington High School auditorium to take part in the annual Choral Extravaganza. The performance is an opportunity for students to share the music they have learned and to introduce graduating elementary school students to the opportunities they will have in middle school and high school. The extravaganza features the D Minors and Middle Cs, Diamond and Clarke's respective select choruses, all of the LHS honors choruses, and a rotation of three LHS a cappella groups: one all-female group, one all-male group, and one mixed group. This year's rotation included Guacamole, Pitchpipes, and Peanut Butter & Jelly.

This past December, after a brief introduction by the LHS choral director Jason Iannuzzi, during which he spoke about the opportunities available in the high school music programs, the choruses and the a cappella groups performed.

Anika Ahuja, a member of the a capella group Noteworthy, believes the Choral Extravaganza is important because it provides students with a glance at the future of a musical career at LHS.

"I think that the Choral Extravaganza has a huge impact over the younger students," Ahuja said. "As an 8th grader, I was a lot more serious about singing at that point, and it gave me a good idea of what singing in high school would be like. Generally, I think the Choral Extravaganza shows the younger students an opportunity for the future while creating an inclusive and fun space."

To conclude the Extravaganza, all performers and elementary school students sang The Storm is Passing Over together, a staple of Lexington Public Schools' choral programs for many years.

Jeremy Fleming, a junior and a member of the a cappella group, Peanut Butter and Jelly, highlighted the finale as one of his favorite aspects of the performance.

"The finale of The Storm is Passing Over is captivating and powerful, because you get to join in with every single Lexington choral student in song," Fleming said.

LHS Playwrights and Performers

Anika Basu
Kylin Gao
Staff Writers

This March, Lexington High School students, families, and friends will attend the annual Winterfest, free of charge. The show will take place in the Blackbox on Mar. 1 and Mar. 2 from 7:00 pm to 9:30 p.m. This year, the festival will include twelve plays, a performance by the LHS Improv Troupe, and various musical performances. The plays are written and performed by students, with faculty involvement in specific pieces.

Carly Kalivas, a drama teacher at both Clarke Middle School and Diamond Middle School, is the director of Winterfest.

"I just love how different all of the scenes are. There is a variety from comedic fun to intense drama. I can't wait to see how they all come together," Kalivas said.

Kalivas is also excited for the Emerson Festival piece, which she helped direct.

"I'm most involved with and interested right now in the Emerson Festival piece—that's the scene I know the best. I'm also excited to have music involved this year; this is a good venue to present that," Kalivas said.

One of the musical pieces will be performed and sung by freshman Ellie Caro. Caro believes these performances will provide a unique experience for the audience.

"People who like seeing small pieces, instead of giant productions [would enjoy Winterfest]," Caro said.

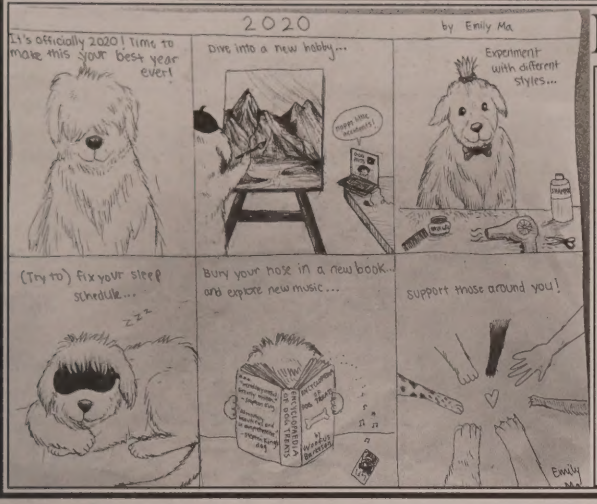
James Allen, a junior, also anticipates a positive experience. He expressed excitement for the audience to see new works of art from his peers and his play. Allen also sees the show as an opportunity to bond with his peers.

"[Winterfest] is a cool opportunity to see people who are involved in other shows, people who want to do drama, and hang out," Allen said.

Allen has many fond memories of preparing for Winterfest.

"The first time we acted out, it was all improv, and it was a cool moment to be able to come up with a story that's meaningful and lighthearted, and interact with people I have never worked with before," Allen said.

Photo by Athena Li.
Ellie Caro, a freshman.


2020
by Emily Ma
It's officially 2020! Time to make this your best year ever!
Dive into a new hobby...
Experiment with different styles...
(Try to) fix your sleep schedule...
Bury your nose in a new book and explore new music...
Support those around you!
Emily Ma

Break the Ice With These Songs

Fine Line - Harry Styles
Finally//Beautiful Stranger - Halsey
The Few Things- JP Saxe, Charlotte Lawrence
Love on the Weekend- John Mayer
Slow Fade- Ruth B.
Location Unknown- HONNE
Brooklyn- Patrick Droney
7 Minutes- Dean Lewis
Beautiful People - Ed Sheeran ft. Khalid
Cherry Wine - Hozier
Suzanne - Leonard Cohen
Good News - Mac Miller
Vienna - Ultravox
Where Is My Mind? - Pixies

"My New Year's Resolution is...."

1. "To not procrastinate. It's a resolution I've been procrastinating [for] four years," Tara Sarma, a senior, said.

2. "To walk my dog more often," Fiona Weir, a sophomore, said.

3. "To spend less time on my phone and get more sleep," Lucy Shubert, a freshman, said.

4. "To do yoga three times a week, at least ... [I hope to get] clarity of mind, and a stronger, more flexible body, because I am aging!" Krista Cardellichio, an academic support teacher, said.

5. "To read more books. Definitely a top one because I love reading books but TV these days makes it a struggle. I miss the feeling of being so invested in a book and the satisfaction of finishing them," Nikki Farahani, a senior, said.

6. "My first [resolution] is to be more self-confident in my own decisions and how I handle situations. I feel like generally I've always been someone who feels the need to defend themselves and apologize in situations as big as fights with friends or even in small scenarios ... I've never been someone who can be like, 'No, I'm right and you're wrong.' I think that believing in yourself and your abilities is so important, and I want to love and believe in myself more this year," Anjali Shah, a junior, said.

Visit
lexmusket.com for more content!

Athlete of the Issue: Danna Ofek

Avni Kamat
Alexander Tang
Staff Writers

As captain of the cross country and indoor track teams, senior Danna Ofek has competed at the highest levels of running, placing tenth at New Englands for the two mile run, and third at the Massachusetts Cross Country Divisionals.

Ofek's running journey began her sophomore year. Before she joined the running team at Lexington High School, her activities were geared more towards the performing arts.

"I was still a theatre girl then," Ofek said.

Ofek participated in musicals throughout middle school and even high school. Her participation in running as a competitive sport began taking off later in her sophomore and junior years. Running has turned into a year-round commitment for Ofek and moreover, into something she greatly enjoys.

"I love the feeling of accomplishing something and working hard towards something. I like that everything is in your control. It's about your personal records, " Ofek said.

Although much of her motivation is from within, Ofek looks to the team environment for support.

"There is a really strong feeling of togetherness. It's a lot of positivity and camaraderie as everyone pushes each other to the same goal," Ofek said.

While she appreciates the strong sense of community present in the LHS sports teams, Ofek also recognizes the time that must be dedicated to the sport.

"It certainly does take up some time. You are going to have to stretch and cross-train in addition to the two to three hours a day that you are putting in after school," Ofek said.

The large time commitment has implications for other parts of her daily life.

"Running requires you to be super focused and super efficient with your homework. You need to get homework done as fast as you can because sleep affects it too. I've learned how important it is to eat well. I've learned to be attentive to the details,

Photo by Phoebe Tian
Danna Ofek, Senior Captain of the Indoor Track Team

[and] follow the little things because it all adds up," Ofek said.

Throughout her running journey, Ofek has faced encountered encouraging and discouraging experiences, learning many lessons along the way.

"My junior year, I was working really hard to break eleven minutes in the two mile but that didn't happen. I ran eleven minutes and three seconds at New Englands [New England High School Outdoor Championships]. I was three seconds short of my goal. But I walked away from it feeling proud of everything I had accomplished," Ofek said.

To those who are looking forward to lacing up their sneakers and taking to the track, Ofek offers some advice.

"Just focus on whatever you know is going to be best for you. Sometimes it is easy to get caught up in what other people on the team are doing, or what their friends are doing who don't run. Just keep focused and know that you ultimately need to do what's best for you to achieve the results," Ofek said.

Ofek has committed to Brown University for cross country and track and field.

Indoor Track Is Ready to Go

Sidharth Vij
Bryant Xia
Staff Writers

Photo by Athena Li.
The newly renovated indoor track.

Indoor track consists of multiple events, including long distance, sprinting, jumping, and throwing. It is one of Lexington High School's largest athletics programs, boasting upwards of 90 members on the boys team alone.

Given the wide array of events, the program works to develop specific skill-sets.

During practices, the field house is split into different sections, each full of students training in their specific events.

Jerry Gong, a freshman indoor track athlete in his first season, has enjoyed the experience so far. He competes in the 55-meter dash, 55-meter hurdles, and long jump.

"I do run with others and I feel as though I am pretty athletic myself. I do feel like I fit in with them. I definitely have a lot of friends who are doing indoor track right now and that makes the transition easier," Gong said.

Leo McGaraghan, a sophomore distance runner, said the running culture within LHS promotes an inclusive atmosphere, with each athlete having a valuable role on the team.

"I feel as though track is quite diverse. There is conversation between the top athletes and the new freshmen on the team, making it more inclusive. It is a very positive environment and I know that track and cross country have helped me get to know the upperclassmen in our school," McGaraghan said.

Head Coach Bill Babcock, who has run the track program for the last 20 years, said the work of indoor track athletes is evidenced at meets where they perform as a team.

The unique nature of track as an individual and team sport is perhaps why the track team attracts dozens of new members every year. However, transitioning from the middle school to high school level is no small task.

"It is a learning process, much like the education system in middle school is a whole lot different in high school," Babcock said.

Fortunately, upperclassmen have taken newer members under their wings over the years. Combined with a coaching staff, the transition is made as smooth as possible.

As of now, both the boys and girls teams have had four consecutive wins. The coaches and athletes look to mirror last year's performance in the Middlesex League. Many current members in the program also wish to continue track at the collegiate level.

"I would love the opportunity to run in college and it would be really fun to be a part of that team environment. I don't know if I will be running at a Division One school but I do hope to be a college track [or] cross country athlete and after college to run on my own or in a marathon," McGaraghan said.